

ED 87th PRECINCT McBAIN

"ONE OF THE MOST FEROCIOUS CASES THAT
MR. MCBAIN HAS DUG UP YET.... HIS MOST CREDIBLE
NIGHTMARE CREATION."—*The New Yorker*

DOLL



DOLL

This, too, is for Dodie and Ray Crane

The city in these pages is imaginary.

The people, the places are all fictitious.

Only the police routine is based on established

investigatory technique.

Chapter 1

The child Anna sat on the floor close to the wall and played with her doll, talking to it, listening. She could hear the voices raised in anger coming from her mother's bedroom through the thin separating wall, but she busied herself with the doll and tried not to be frightened. The man in her mother's bedroom was shouting now. She tried not to hear what he was saying. She brought the doll close to her face and kissed its plastic cheek, and then talked to it again, and Ustened.

In the bedroom next door, her mother was being murdered.

Her mother was called Tinka, a chic and lacquered label concocted by blending her given name, Tina, with her middle name, Karin. Tinka was normally a beautiful woman, no question about it. She'd have been a beautiful woman even if her name was Beulah. Or Bertha. Or perhaps even Brunhilde. The Tinka tag only enhanced her natural good looks, adding an essential gloss, a necessary pohsh, an air of mystery and adventure.

Tinka Sachs was a fashion model.

She was, no question about it, a very beautiful woman. She possessed a finely sculptured face that was perfectly suited to the demands of her profession, a wide forehead, high pronounced cheekbones, a generous mouth, a patrician nose, slanted green eyes flecked with chips of amber; oh, she was normally a beauty, no question about it. Her body was a model's body, hthe and loose and gently angled, with long slender legs, narrow hips, and a tiny bosom. She walked with a model's insinuating ghde, pelvis tilted, crotch cleaving the air, head erect. She laughed with a model's merry shower of musical syllables, painted hps drawing back over capped teeth, amber eyes glowing. She sat with a model's carelessly draped ease, posing even in her own hving room, invariably choosing the wall or sofa that best offset her clothes, or her long blonde hair, or her mysterious green eyes flecked with chips of amber; oh, she was normally a beauty.

She was not so beautiful at the moment.

She was not so beautiful because the man who followed her around the room shouting obscenities at her, the man who stalked her from wall to wall and boxed her into the narrow passage circumscribed by the king-sized bed and the marble-topped dresser opposite, the man

who closed in on her obvious to her murmuring, her pleading, her sobbing, the man was grasping a kitchen knife with which he had been slashing her repeatedly for the past three minutes.

The obscenities spilled from the man's mouth in a steady unbroken torrent, the anger having reached a pitch that was unvaried now, neither rising nor falling in volume or intensity. The knife blade swung in a short, tight arc, back and forth, its rhythm as unvaried as that of the words that poured from the man's mouth. Obscenities and blade, like partners in an evil copulation, moved together in perfect rhythm and pitch, enveloping Tinka in alternating splashes of blood and spittle. She kept murmuring the man's name pleadingly, again and again, as the blade ripped into her flesh. But the guttering arc was relentless. The razor-sharp blade, the monotonous flow of obscenities, inexorably forced her bleeding and torn into the far corner of the room, where the back of her head collided with an original Chagall, tilting it slightly askew, the knife moving in again in its brief terrifying arc, the blade slicing parallel bleeding ditches across her small breasts and moving lower across the flat abdomen, her peignoir tearing again with a clinging silky blood-sotted sound as the knife blade plunged deeper with each step closer he took. She said his name once more, she shouted his name, and then she murmured the word 'Please', and then she fell back against the wall again, knocking the Chagall from its hook so that a riot of framed color dropped heavily over her shoulder, falling in a lopsided angle past the long blonde hair, and the open red gashes across her throat and naked chest, the tattered blue peignoir, the natural brown of her exposed pubic hair, the blue satin slippers. She fell gasping for breath, spitting blood, headlong over the painting, her forehead colliding with the wide oaken frame, her blonde hair covering the Chagall reds and yellows and violets with a fine misty golden haze, the knife slash across her throat pouring blood onto the canvas, setting her hair afloat in a pool of red that finally overspilled the oaken frame and ran onto the carpet.

Next door, the child Anna clung fiercely to her doll.

She said a reassuring word to it, and then listened in terror as she heard footfalls in the hall outside her closed bedroom door. She kept listening breathlessly until she heard the front door to the apartment open and then close again.

She was still sitting in the bedroom, clutching her doll, when the superintendent came up the next morning to change a faucet washer Mrs Sachs had complained about the day before.

April is the fourth month of the year.

It is important to know that if you are a cop, you can sometimes get a little confused.

More often than not, your confusion will be compounded of one part exhaustion, one part tedium, and one part disgust. The exhaustion is an ever-present condition and one to which you have become slowly accustomed over the years. You know that the department does not recognize Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays, and so you are even prepared to work on Christmas morning if you have to, especially if someone intent on committing mischief is inconsiderate enough to plan it for that day witness General George Washington and the unsuspecting Hessians, those drunks. You know that a detective's work schedule does not revolve around a fixed day, and so you have learned to adjust to your odd waking hours and your shorter sleeping time, but you have never been able to adjust to the nagging feeling of exhaustion that is the result of too much crime and too few hours, too few men to pit against it. You are sometimes a drag at home with your wife and children, but that is only because you are tired, boy what a life, all work and no play, wow.

The tedium is another thing again, but it also helps to generate confusion. Crime is the most exciting sport in the world, right? Sure, ask anybody. Then how come it can be so boring when you're a working cop who is typing reports in triplicate and logging it all over the city talking to old ladies in flowered house dresses in apartments smelling of death? How can the routine of detection become something as prescribed as the ritual of a bullfight, never changing, so that even a gun duel in a nighttime alley can assume familiar dimensions and be regarded with the same feeling of ennui that accompanies a routine request to the B.C.L? The boredom is confounding as hell. It clasps hands with the exhaustion and makes you wonder whether this is January or Friday.

The disgust comes into it only if you are a human being. Some cops aren't. But if you are a human being, you are sometimes appalled by what your fellow human beings are capable of doing. You can understand lying because you practice it in a watered-down form as a daily method of smoothing the way, helping the machinery of mankind to function more easily without getting fouled by too much truth-stuff. You can understand

stealing because when you were a kid you sometimes swiped pencils from the public school supply closet, and once a toy airplane from the

five and ten. You can even understand murder because there is a dark and secret place in your own heart where you have hated deeply enough to kill. You can understand all these things, but you are nonetheless disgusted when they are piled upon you in profusion, when you are constantly confronted with Uars, thieves and slaughterers, when all human decency seems in a state of suspension for the eight or twelve or thirty-six hours you are in the squadroom or out answering a squeal. Perhaps you could accept an occasional corpsedeath is only a part of life, isn't it? It is corpse heaped upon corpse that leads to disgust and further leads to confusion. If you can no longer tell one corpse from another, if you can no longer distinguish one open bleeding head from the next, then how is April any different from October?

It was April.

The torn and lovely woman lay in profile across the bloody face of the Chagall painting. The lab technicians were dusting for latent prints, vacuuming for hairs and traces of fiber, carefully wrapping for transportation the knife found in the corridor just outside the bedroom door, the dead girl's pocket book, which seemed to contain everything but money.

Detective Steve CareUa made his notes and then walked out of the room and down the hall to where the Uttle girl sat in a very big chair, her feet not touching the floor, her doll sleeping across her lap. The httle girl's name was Anna Sachsone of the patrolmen had told him that the moment Carella arrived. The doll seemed almost as big as she did.

'Hello,' he said to her, and felt the old confusion once again, the exhaustion because he had not been home since Thursday morning, the tedium because he was embarking on another round of routine questioning, and the disgust because the person he was about to question was only a Uttle girl and her mother was dead and mutilated in the room next door. He tried to smile. He was not very good at it. The httle girl said nothing. She looked up at him out of very big eyes. Her lashes were long and brown, her mouth drawn in stoic silence beneath a nose she had inherited from her mother. Unblinkingly, she watched him. Unblinkingly, she said nothing.

'Your name is Anna, isn't it?' Carella said.

The child nodded.

‘Do you know what my name is?’

‘No.’

‘Steve.’

The child nodded again.

‘I have a little girl about your age,’ Carella said. ‘She’s a twin. How old are you, Anna?’

‘Five.’

‘That’s just how old my daughter is.’

‘Mmm,’ Anna said. She paused a moment, and then asked, ‘Is Mommy killed?’

‘Yes,’ Carella said. ‘Yes, honey, she is.’

‘I was afraid to go in and look.’

It’s better you didn’t.’

‘She got killed last night, didn’t she?’ Anna asked.

‘Yes.’

There was a silence in the room. Outside, Carella could hear the muted sounds of a conversation between the police photographer and the m.e. An April fly buzzed against the bedroom window. He looked into the child’s upturned face.

‘Were you here last night?’ he asked.

‘Um-huh.’

‘Where?’

Here. Right here in my room.’ She stroked the doll’s cheek, and then looked up at Carella and asked, ‘What’s a twin?’

‘When two babies are born at the same time.’

‘Oh.’

She continued looking up at him, her eyes tearless, wide, and certain in the small white face. At last she said, ‘The man did it.’

‘What man?’ Carella asked.

‘The one who was with her.’

‘Who?’

‘Mommy. The man who was with her in her room.’

Who was the man?’

I don’t know.’

‘Did you see him?’

‘No. I was here playing with Chatterbox when he came in.’

‘Is Chatterbox a friend of yours?’

‘Chatterbox is my dolly, ‘ the child said, and she held up the doll and giggled, and Carella wanted to scoop her into his arms, hold her close, tell her there was no such thing as sharpened steel and sudden death.

‘When was this, honey?’ he asked. ‘Do you know what time it was?’

‘I don’t know,’ she said, and shrugged. ‘I only know how to tell twelve o’clock and seven o’clock, that’s all.’

‘Well ... was it dark?’

‘Yes, it was after supper.’

This man came in after supper, is that right?’

‘Yes.’

‘Did your mother know this man?’

‘Oh, yes,’ Anna said. ‘She was laughing and everything when he first came in.’

Then what happened?’

‘I don’t know.’ Anna shrugged again. ‘I was here playing.’

There was another silence.

The first tears welled into her eyes suddenly, leaving the rest of the face untouched; there was no trembling of Up, no crumbling of

features, the tears simply overspilled her eyes and ran down her cheeks. She sat as still as a stone, crying soundlessly while Carella stood before her helplessly, a hulking man who suddenly felt weak and ineffective before this silent torrent of grief

He gave her his handkerchief

She took it wordlessly and blew her nose, but she did not dry her eyes. Then she handed it back to him and said, 'Thank you,' with the tears still running down her face endlessly, sitting stunned with her small hands folded over the doll's chest.

'He was hitting her,' she said. 'I could hear her crying, but I was afraid to go in. So I ... I made beUeve I didn't hear. And then ... then I really didn't hear. I just kept talking with Chatterbox, that was all. That way I couldn't hear what he was doing to her in the other room.'

'All right, honey,' Carella said. He motioned to the patrolman standing in the doorway. When the patrolman joined him, he whispered, 'Is her father around? Has he been notified?'

'Gee, I don't know,' the patrolman said. He turned and shouted, 'Anybody know if the husband's been contacted?'

A Homicide cop standmg with one of the lab technicians looked up from his notebook and said, 'He's in Arizona. They been divorced for three years now.'

Lieutenant Peter Byrnes was normally a patient and understanding man, but there were times lately when Bert Kling gave him a severe pain in the ass. And whereas Byrnes, being patient and understanding, could appreciate the reasons for Kling's behavior, this in no way made Kling any nicer to have around the office. The way Byrnes figured it, psychology was certainly an important factor in pohce work because it helped you to recognize that there were no longer any villains in the world, there were only disturbed people. Psychology substituted understanding for condemnation. It was a very nice tool to possess, psychology was, until a cheap thief kicked you in the groin one night. It then become somewhat difficult to imagine the thief as a put-upon soul who'd had a shabby childhood. In much the same way, though Byrnes completely understood the trauma that was responsible for Kling's current behavior, he was finding it more and more difficult to accept Kling as anything but a cop who was going to hell with himself.

'I want to transfer him out,' he told Carella that morning.

‘Why?’

‘Because he’s disrupting the whole damn squadroom, that’s why,’ Byrnes said. He did not enjoy discussing this, nor would he normally have asked for consultation on any firm decision he had made. His decision, however, was anything but final, that was the damn thing about it. He liked Kling, and yet he no longer liked him. He thought he could be a good cop, but he was turning into a bad one. ‘I’ve got enough bad cops around here,’ he said aloud.

‘Bert isn’t a bad cop,’ Carella said. He stood before Byrnes’s cluttered desk in the corner office and listened to the sounds of early spring on the street outside the building, and he thought of the five-year-old girl named Anna Sachs who had taken his handkerchief while the tears streamed down her face.

‘He’s a surly shit,’ Byrnes said. ‘Okay, I know what happened to him, but people have died before, Steve, people have been killed before. And if you’re a man you grow up to it, you don’t act as if everybody’s responsible for it. We didn’t have anything to do with his girl friend’s death, that’s the plain and simple truth, and I personally am sick and tired of being blamed for it.’

‘He’s not blaming you for it, Pete. He’s not blaming any of us.’

‘He’s blaming the world, and that’s worse. This morning, he had a big argument with Meyer just because Meyer picked up the phone on his desk.

I mean, the goddamn phone was ringing, so instead of crossing the room to his own desk, Meyer picked up the closest phone, which was on KJing’s desk, so KJing starts a row. Now you can’t have that kind of attitude in a squadroom where men are working together, you can’t have it, Steve. I’m going to ask for his transfer.’

‘That’d be the worst thing that could happen to him.’

*It’d be the best thing for the squad.’

‘I don’t think so.’

‘Nobody’s asking your advice,’ Byrnes said flatly.

Then why the hell did you call me in here?’

‘You see what I mean?’ Byrnes said. He rose from his desk abruptly

and began pacing the floor near the meshed-grill windows. He was a compact man and he moved with an economy that belied the enormous energy in his powerful body. Short for a detective, muscular, with a bullet-shaped head and small blue eyes set in a face seamed with wrinkles, he paced briskly behind his desk and shouted, 'You see the trouble he's causing? Even you and I can't sit down and have a sensible discussion about him without starting to yell. That's just what I mean, that's just why I want him out of here.'

'You don't throw away a good watch because it's running a little slow,' Carella said.

'Don't give me any goddamn similes,' Byrnes said. 'I'm running a squadroom here, not a clock shop.'

'Metaphors,' Carella corrected.

'Whatever,' Byrnes said. 'I'm going to call the Chief tomorrow and ask him to transfer Kling out. That's it.'

'Where?'

'What do you mean where? What do I care where? Out of here, that's all.'

'But where? To another squadroom with a bunch of strange guys, so he can get on their nerves even more than he does ours? So he can'

'Oh, so you admit it.'

'That Bert gets on my nerves? Sure, he does.'

'And the situation isn't improving, Steve, you know that too. It gets worse every day. Look, what the hell am I wasting my breath for? He goes, and that's it.' Byrnes gave a brief emphatic nod, and then sat heavily in his chair again, glaring up at Carella with an almost childish challenge on his face.

Carella sighed. He had been on duty for close to fifty hours now, and he was tired. He had checked in at eight-forty-five Thursday morning, and been out all that day gathering information for the backlog of cases that had been piling up all through the month of March. He had caught six hours' sleep on a cot in the locker room that night, and then been called out at seven on Friday morning by the fire department, who suspected arson in a three-alarm blaze they'd answered on the South Side. He had come back to the squadroom at

noon to find four telephone messages on his desk. By the time he had returned all the calls one was from an assistant m.e. who took a full hour to explain the toxicological analysis of a poison they had found in the stomach contents of a beagle, the seventh such dog similarly poisoned in the past week the clock on the wall read one-thirty. Carella sent down for a pastrami on rye, a container of milk, and a side of French fries. Before the order arrived, he had to leave the squadroom to answer a burglary squeal on North Eleventh. He did not come back until five-thirty, at which time he turned the phone over to a complaining KJing and went down to the locker room to try to sleep again. At eleven o'clock Friday night, the entire squad, working in flying wedges of three detectives to a team, culminated a two-month period of surveillance by raiding twenty-six known numbers banks in the area, a sanitation project that was not finished until five on Saturday morning. At eight-thirty a.m., Carella answered the Sachs squeal and questioned a crying little girl. It was now ten-thirty a.m., and he was tired, and he wanted to go home, and he didn't want to argue in favor of a man who had become everything the lieutenant said he was, he was just too damn weary. But earlier this morning he had looked down at the body of a woman he had not known at all, had seen her ripped and lacerated flesh, and had felt a pain bordering on nausea. Now weary, bedraggled, unwilling to argue he could remember the mutilated beauty of Tinka Sachs, and he felt something of what Bert Kling must have known in that Culver Avenue bookshop not four years ago when he'd held the bullet-torn body of Claire Townsend in his arms.

'Let him work with me,' he said.

'What do you mean?'

*On the Sachs case. I've been teaming with Meyer lately. Give me Bert instead.'

'What's the matter, don't you like Meyer?'

I love Meyer, I'm tired, I want to go home to bed, will you please let me have Bert on this case?'

'What'll that accompUsh?'

*I don't know.'

'I don't approve of shock therapy,' Bymes said. This Sachs woman was brutally murdered. All you'll do is remind Bert'

Therapy, my ass,' Carella said. 'I want to be with him, I want to talk to him, I want to let him know he's still got some people on this goddam squad who think he's a decent human being worth saving. Now, Pete, I really am very very tired and I don't want to argue this any further, I mean it. If you want to send Bert to another squad, that's your business, you're the boss here, I'm not going to argue with you, that's all. I mean it. Now just make up your mind, okay?'

Take him,' Bymes said.

Thank you,' Carella answered. He went to the door. 'Good night,' he said, and walked out.

Chapter 2

Sometimes a case starts like sevens coming out.

The Sachs case started just that way on Monday morning when Steve Carella and Bert Kling arrived at the apartment building on Stafford Place to question the elevator operator.

The elevator operator was close to seventy years old, but he was still in remarkable good health, standing straight and tall, almost as tall as Carella and of the same general build. He had only one eye, however—he was called Cyclops by the superintendent of the building and by just about everyone else he knew and it was this single fact that seemed to make him a somewhat less than reliable witness. He had lost his eye, he explained, in World War I. It had been bayoneted out of his head by an advancing German in the Ardennes Forest. Cyclops who up to that time had been called Ernest had backed away from the blade before it had a chance to pass completely through his eye and into his brain, and then had carefully and passionlessly shot the German three times in the chest, killing him. He did not realize his eye was gone until he got back to the aid station. Until then, he thought the bayonet had only gashed his brow and caused a flow of blood that made it difficult to see. He was proud of his missing eye, and proud of the nickname Cyclops. Cyclops had been a giant, and although Ernest Messner was only six feet tall, he had lost his eye for democracy, which is as good a cause as any for which to lose an eye. He was also very proud of his remaining eye, which he claimed was capable of twenty-twenty vision. His remaining eye was a clear penetrating blue, as sharp as the mind lurking somewhere behind it. He listened intently to everything the two detectives asked him, and then he said, 'Sure, I took him up myself.'

'You took a man up to Mrs Sachs's apartment Friday night?' Carella asked.

'That's right.'

'What time was this?'

Cyclops thought for a moment. He wore a black patch over his empty socket, and he might have looked a little like an aging Hathaway Shirt man in an elevator uniform, except that he was bald. 'Must have been nine or nine-thirty, around then.'

‘Did you take the man down, too?’

‘Nope.’

‘What time did you go off?’

‘I didn’t leave the building until eight o’clock in the morning.’

‘You work from when to when, Mr Messner?’

‘We’ve got three shifts in the building,’ Cyclops explained. ‘The morning shift is eight a.m. to four p.m. The afternoon shift is four p.m. to midnight. And the graveyard shift is midnight to eight a.m.’

‘Which shift is yours?’ Kling asked.

‘The graveyard shift. You just caught me, in fact. I’ll be relieved here in ten minutes.’

‘If you start work at midnight, what were you doing here at nine p.m. Monday?’

‘Fellow who has the shift before mine went home sick. The super called me about eight o’clock, asked if I could come in early. I did him the favor. That was a long night, believe me.’

‘It was an even longer night for Tinka Sachs,’ Kling said.

‘Yeah. Well, anyway, I took that fellow up at nine, nine-thirty, and he still hadn’t come down by the time I was relieved.’

*At eight in the morning,’ Carella said.

That’s right’

‘Is that usual?’ Khng asked.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Did Tinka Sachs usually have men coming here who went up to her apartment at nine, nine-thirty, and weren’t down by eight the next morning?’

Cyclops blinked with his single eye. ‘I don’t like to talk about the dead,’ he said.

‘We’re here precisely so you can talk about the dead,’ Kling answered.

‘And about the Uving who visited the dead. I asked a simple question, and I’d appreciate a simple answer. Was Tinka Sachs in the habit of entertaining men all night long?’

Cyclops blinked again. ‘Take it easy, young fellow,’ he said. ‘You’ll scare me right back into my elevator.’

Carella chose to laugh at this point, breaking the tension. Cyclops smiled in appreciation.

‘You understand, don’t you?’ he said to Carella. ‘What Mrs Sachs did up there in her apartment was her business, not anyone else’s.’

‘Of course,’ Carella said. ‘I guess my partner was just wondering why you weren’t suspicious. About taking a man up who didn’t come down again. That’s all.’

‘Oh,’ Cyclops thought for a moment. Then he said, ‘Well, I didn’t give it a second thought.’

‘Then it was usual, is that right?’ Kling asked.

‘I’m not saying it was usual, and I’m not saying it wasn’t. I’m saying if a woman over twenty-one wants to have a man in her apartment, it’s not for me to say how long he should stay, all day or all night, it doesn’t matter to me, sonny. You got that?’

‘I’ve got it,’ Khng said flatly.

‘And I don’t give a damn what they do up there, either, all day or all night, that’s their business if they’re old enough to vote. You got that, too?’

‘I’ve got it,’ Kling said.

‘Fine,’ Cyclops answered, and he nodded.

‘Actually,’ Carella said, ‘the man didn’t have to take the elevator down, did he? He could have gone up to the roof, and crossed over to the next building.’

‘Sure,’ Cyclops said. ‘I’m only saying that neither me nor anybody else working in this building has the right to wonder about what anybody’s doing up there or how long they’re taking to do it, or whether they choose to leave the building by the front door or the roof or the steps leading to the basement or even by jumping out the window, it’s none

of our business. You close that door, you're private. That's my notion.'

'That's a good notion,' Carella said.

'Thank you.'

'You're welcome.'

'What'd the man look like?' Kling asked. 'Do you remember?'

'Yes, I remember,' Cyclops said. He glanced at Kling coldly, and then turned to Carella. 'Have you got a pencil and some paper?'

'Yes,' Carella said. He took a notebook and a slender gold pen from his inside jacket pocket. 'Go ahead.'

'He was a tall man, maybe six-two or six-three. He was blond. His hair was very straight, the kind of hair Sonny Tufts has, do you know him?'

'Sonny Tufts?' Carella said.

'That's right, the movie star, him. This fellow didn't look at all like him, but his hair was the same sort of straight blond hair.'

'What color were his eyes?' Kling asked.

'Didn't see them. He was wearing sunglasses.'

'At night?'

'Lots of people wear sunglasses at night nowadays,' Cyclops said.

'That's true,' Carella said.

'Like masks,' Cyclops added.

'Yes.'

'He was wearing sunglasses, and also he had a very deep tan, as if he'd just come back from down south someplace. He had on a Ught grey raincoat; it was drizzling a little Friday night, do you recall?'

'Yes, that's right,' Carella said. 'Was he carrying an umbrella?'

'No umbrella.'

'Did you notice any of his clothing under the raincoat?'

‘His suit was a dark grey, charcoal grey, I could tell that by his trousers. He was wearing a white shirt it showed up here, in the opening of the coat and a black tie.’

‘What color were his shoes?’

‘Black.’

‘Did you notice any scars or other marks on his face or hands?’

‘No.’

‘Was he wearing any rings?’

‘A gold ring with a green stone on the pinky of his right hand no, wait a minute, it was his left hand.’

‘Any other jewelry you might have noticed? Cuff links, tie clasp?’

‘No, I didn’t see any.’

‘Was he wearing a hat?’

‘No hat.’

‘Was he clean-shaven?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Did he have a beard or a mustache?’ Kling said.

‘No. He was clean-shaven.’

‘How old would you say he was?’

‘Late thirties, early forties.’

‘What about his build? Heavy, medium, or slight?’

‘He was a big man. He wasn’t fat, but he was a big man, muscular. I guess I’d have to say he was heavy. He had very big hands. I noticed the ring on his pinky looked very small for his hand. He was heavy, I’d say, yes, very definitely.’

‘Was he carrying anything? Briefcase, suitcase, attaché?’

Nothing.’

‘Did he speak to you?’

‘He just gave me the floor number, that’s all. Nine, he said. That was all.’

‘What sort of voice did he have? Deep, medium, high?’

‘Deep.’

‘Did you notice any accent or regional dialect?’

‘He only said one word. He sounded like anybody else in the city.’

‘I’m going to say that word several ways,’ Carella said. ‘*Would you tell me which way sounded most like him?’

‘Sure, go ahead.’

‘Ny-un,’ Carella said.

‘Nope.’

‘Noin.’

‘Nope.’

‘Nahn.*

‘Nope.’

‘Nan.’

‘Nope.’

Nine.’

That’s it. Straight out. No decorations.’

‘Okay, good,’ Carella said. ‘You got anything else, Bert?’

‘Nothing else,’ Kling said.

‘You’re a very observant man,’ Carella said to Cyclops.

‘All I do every day is look at the people I take up and down,’ Cyclops answered. He shrugged. ‘It makes the job a Uttle more interesting.’

‘We appreciate everything you’ve told us,’ Carella said. ‘Thank you.’

‘Don’t mention it.’

Outside the building, Kling said, ‘The snotty old bastard.’

‘He gave us a lot,’ Carella said mildly.

‘Yeah.’

‘We’ve really got a good description now.’

‘Too good, if you ask me.’

‘What do you mean?’

The guy has one eye in his head, and one foot in the grave. So he reels off details even a trained observer would have missed. He might have been making up the whole thing, just to prove he’s not a worthless old man.’

‘Nobody’s worthless,’ Carella said mildly. ‘Old or otherwise.’

‘The humanitarian school of criminal detection,’ Kling said.

‘What’s wrong with humanity?’

‘Nothing. It was a human being who slashed Tinka Sachs to ribbons, wasn’t it?’ Kling asked.

And to this, Carella had no answer.

A good modeling agency serves as a great deal more than a booking office for the girls it represents. It provides an answering service for the busy young girl about town, a baby-sitting service for the working mother, a guidance-and-counseling service for the man-beleagured model, a pied-d-terre for the harried and hurried between-sittings beauty.

Art and Leslie Cutler ran a good modeling agency. They ran it with the precision of a computer and the understanding of an analyst. Their offices were smart and walnut-paneled, a suite of three rooms on Carrington Avenue, near the bridge leading to Calm’s Point. The address of the agency was announced over a doorway leading to a flight of carpeted steps. The address plate resembled a Parisian street sign, white enameled on a blue field, 21 Carrington, with the blue-carpeted steps beyond leading to the second story of the building. At the top of the stairs there was a second

blue-and-white enameled sign, Paris again, except that this one was lettered in lowercase and it read, the cutlers.

Carella and Kling climbed the steps to the second floor, observed the chic nameplate without any noticeable show of appreciation, and walked into a small carpeted entrance foyer in which stood a white desk starkly fashionable against the walnut walls, nothing else. A girl sat behind the desk. She was astonishingly beautiful, exactly the sort of receptionist one would expect in a modeling agency; if she was only the receptionist, my God, what did the models look like?

‘Yes, gentlemen, may I help you?’ she asked. Her voice was Vassar out of finishing school out of country day. She wore eyeglasses with exaggerated black frames that did nothing whatever to hide the dazzling brilliance of her big blue eyes. Her makeup was subdued and wickedly innocent, a touch of pale pink on her lips, a blush of rose at her cheeks, the frames of her spectacles serving as liner for her eyes. Her hair was black and her smile was sunshine. Carella answered with a sunshine smile of his own, the one he usually reserved for movie queens he met at the governor’s mansion.

‘We’re from the police,’ he said. ‘I’m Detective Carella; this is my partner. Detective Kling.’

‘Yes?’ the girl said. She seemed completely surprised to have policemen in her reception room.

‘We’d like to talk to either Mr or Mrs Cutler,’ Kling said. ‘Are they in?’

‘Yes, but what is this in reference to?’ the girl asked.

‘It’s in reference to the murder of Tinka Sachs,’ Kling said.

*Oh,’ the girl said. ‘Oh, yes.’ She reached for a button on the executive phone panel, hesitated, shrugged, looked up at them with radiant blue-eyed innocence, and said, ‘I suppose you have identification and all that.’

Carella showed her his shield. The girl looked expectantly at Kling. Kling sighed, reached into his pocket, and opened his wallet to where his shield was pinned to the leather.

‘We never get detectives up here,’ the girl said in explanation, and pressed the button on the panel.

‘Yes?’ a voice said.

‘Mr Cutler, there are two detectives to see you, a Mr King and a Mr Coppola.’

‘Kling and Carella,’ Carella corrected.

‘Kling and Capella,’ the girl said.

Carella let it go.

‘Ask them to come right in,’ Cutler said.

‘Yes, sir.’ The girl clicked off and looked up at the detectives. ‘Won’t you go in, please? Through the bull pen and straight back.’

‘Through the what?’

‘The bull pen. Oh, that’s the main office, you’ll see it. It’s right inside the door there.’ The telephone rang. The girl gestured vaguely toward what looked like a solid walnut wall, and then picked up the receiver. ‘The Cutlers,’ she said. ‘One moment, please.’ She pressed a button and then said, ‘Mrs Cutler, it’s Alex Jamison on five-seven, do you want to take it?’ She nodded, listened for a moment, and then replaced the receiver. Carella and Kling had just located the walnut knob on the walnut door hidden in the white wall. Carella smiled sheepishly at the girl (blue eyes blinked back radiantly) and opened the door.

The bull pen, as the girl had promised, was just behind the reception room. It was a large open area with the same basic walnut-and-white decor, broken by the color of the drapes and the upholstery fabric on two huge couches against the left-hand window wall. The windows were draped in diaphanous white nylon, and the couches were done in a complementary brown, the fabric nubby and coarse in contrast to the nylon. Three girls sat on the couches, their long legs crossed. All of them were reading *Vogue*. One of them had her head inside a portable hair dryer. None of them looked up as the men came into the room. On the right-hand side of the room, a fourth woman sat behind a long white Formica counter, a phone to her ear, busily scribbling on a pad as she listened. The woman was in her early forties, with the unmistakable bones of an ex-model. She glanced up briefly as Carella and Kling hesitated inside the doorway, and then went back to her jottings, ignoring them.

There were three huge charts affixed to the wall behind her. Each chart was divided into two-by-two-inch squares, somewhat like a colorless checkerboard. Running down the extreme left-hand side of each chart was a column of small photographs. Running across the top

of each chart was a Usting for every working hour of the day. The charts were covered with plexiglass panels, and a black crayon pencil hung on a cord to the right of each one. Alongside the photographs, crayoned onto the charts in the appropriate time slots, was a record and a reminder of any model's sittings for the week, readable at a glance. To the right of the charts, and accessible

through an opening in the counter, there was a cubbyhole arrangement of mailboxes, each separate slot marked with similar small photographs.

The wall bearing the door through which Carella and KJing had entered was covered with eight-by-ten black-and-white photos of every model the agency represented, some seventy-five in all. The photos bore no identifying names. A waist-high runner carried black crayon pencils spaced at intervals along the length of the wall. A wide white band under each photograph, plexiglass-covered, served as the writing area for telephone messages. A model entering the room could, in turn, check her eight-by-ten photo for any calls, her photo-marked mailbox for any letters, and her photo-marked slot on one of the three charts for her next assignment. Looking into the room, you somehow got the vague impression that photography played a major part in the business of this agency. You also had the disquieting feeling that you had seen all of these faces a hundred times before, staring down at you from billboards and up at you from magazine covers. Putting an identifying name under any single one of them would have been akin to labeling the Taj Mahal or the Empire State Building. The only naked wall was the one facing them as they entered, and itlike the reception-room wallseemed to be made of soUd walnut, with nary a door in sight.

*I think I see a knob,' CareUa whispered, and they started across the room toward the far wall. The woman behind the counter glanced up as they passed, and then pulled the phone abruptly from her ear with a 'Just a second, Alex,' and said to the two detectives, 'Yes, may I help you?'

'We're looking for Mr Cutler's offfice,' Carella said.

Yes?' she said.

'Yes, we're detectives. We're investigating the murder of Tinka Sachs.'

'Oh. Straight ahead,' the woman said. 'I'm LesUe Cutler. I'll join you as soon as I'm oflF the phone.'

‘Thank you,’ Carella said. He walked to the walnut wall, Kling following close behind him, and knocked on what he supposed was the door.

‘Come in,’ a man’s voice said.

Art Cutler was a man in his forties with straight blond hair like Sunny Tufts, and with at least six feet four inches of muscle and bone that stood revealed in a dark blue suit as he rose behind his desk, smiling, and extended his hand.

‘Come in, gentlemen,’ he said. His voice was deep. He kept his hand extended while Carella and Kling crossed to the desk, and then he shook

hands with each in turn, his grip firm and strong. ‘Sit down, won’t you?’ he said, and indicated a pair of Saarinen chairs, one at each corner of his desk. ‘You’re here about Tinka,’ he said dolefully.

‘Yes,’ Carella said.

‘Terrible thing. A maniac must have done it, don’t you think?’

‘I don’t know,’ Carella said.

‘Well, it must have been, don’t you think?’ he said to Kling.

‘I don’t know,’ Kling said.

‘That’s why we’re here, Mr Cutler,’ Carella explained. ‘To find out what we can about the girl. We’re assuming that an agent would know a great deal about the people he represents’

‘Yes, that’s true,’ Cutler interrupted, ‘and especially in Tinka’s case.’

‘Why especially in her case?’

‘Well, we’d handled her career almost from the very beginning.’

‘How long would that be, Mr Cutler?’

‘Oh, at least ten years. She was only nineteen when we took her on, and she was ... well, let me see, she was thirty in February, no, it’d be almost eleven years, that’s right.’

‘February what?’ Kling asked.

‘February third,’ Cutler replied. ‘She’d done a little modeling on the coast before she signed with us, but nothing very impressive. We got her into all the important magazines. Vogue, Harper’s, Mademoiselle, well, you name them. Do you know what Tinka Sachs was earning?’

‘No, what?’ Kling said.

‘Sixty dollars an hour. Multiply that by an eight-or ten-hour day, an average of six days a week, and you’ve got somewhere in the vicinity of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year.’ Cutler paused. ‘That’s a lot of money. That’s more than the president of the United States earns.’

‘With none of the headaches,’ Kling said.

‘Mr Cutler,’ Carella said, ‘when did you last see Tinka Sachs alive?’

‘Late Friday afternoon,’ Cutler said.

‘Can you give us the circumstances?’

‘Well, she had a sitting at five, and she stopped in around seven to pick up her mail and to see if there had been any calls. That’s all.’

‘Had there?’ Kling asked.

‘Had there what?’

‘Been any calls?’

‘I’m sure I don’t remember. The receptionist usually posts all calls shortly after they’re received. You may have seen our photo wall’

‘Yes,’ Kling said.

‘Well, our receptionist takes care of that. If you want me to check with her, she may have a record, though I doubt it. Once a call is crayoned onto the wall’

‘What about mail?’

‘I don’t know if she had any or ... wait a minute, yes, I think she did pick some up. I remember she was leafing through some envelopes when I came out of my office to chat with her.’

‘What time did she leave here?’ Carella asked.

‘About seven-fifteen.’

‘For another sitting?’

‘No, she was heading home. She has a daughter, you know. A five-year-old.’

‘Yes, I know,’ Carella said.

‘Well, she was going home,’ Cutler said.

‘Do you know where she Uves?’ Kling asked.

‘Yes.’

‘Where?’

‘Stafford Place.’

‘Have you ever been there?’

‘Yes, of course.’

‘How long do you suppose it would take to get from this office to her apartment?’

‘No more than fifteen minutes.’

‘Then Tinka would have been home by seven-thirty ... //she went directly home.’

‘Yes, I suppose so.’

‘Did she say she was going directly home?’

‘Yes. No, she said she wanted to pick up some cake, and then she was going home.’

‘Cake?’

‘Yes. There’s a shop up the street that’s exceptionally good. Many of our mannequins buy cakes and pastry there.’

‘Did she say she was expecting someone later on in the evening?’ Kling asked.

‘No, she didn’t say what her plans were.’

Would your receptionist know if any of those telephone messages related to her plans for the evening?’

‘I don’t know, we can ask her.’

‘Yes, we’d like to,’ Carella said.

‘What were your plans for last Friday night, Mr Cutler?’ Kling asked.

‘My plans?’

‘Yes.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘What time did you leave the office?’

‘Why would you possibly want to know that?’ Cutler asked.

‘You were the last person to see her alive,’ Kling said.

‘No, her murderer was the last person to see her alive,’ Cutler corrected. ‘And if I can believe what I read in the newspapers, her daughter was the next person to see her alive. So I really can’t understand how Tinka’s visit to the agency or my plans for the evening are in any way germane, or even related, to her death.’

‘Perhaps they’re not, Mr Cutler,’ Carella said, ‘but I’m sure you realize we’re obliged to investigate every possibility.’

Cutler frowned, including Carella in whatever hostility he had originally reserved for Kling. He hesitated a moment and then grudgingly said, ‘My wife and I joined some friends for dinner at Les Trois Chats. ‘ He paused and added caustically, ‘That’s a French restaurant.’

‘What time was that?’ Kling asked.

‘Eight o’clock.’

‘Where were you at nine?’

‘Still having dinner.’

‘And at nine-thirty?’

Cutler sighed and said, ‘We didn’t leave the restaurant until a little

after ten.'

'And then what did you do?'

'Really, is this necessary?' Cutler said, and scowled at the detectives. Neither of them answered. He sighed again and said, 'We walked along Hall Avenue for a while, and then my wife and I left our friends and took a cab home.'

The door opened.

Leshe Cutler breezed into the office, saw the expression on her husband's face, weighed the silence that greeted her entrance, and immediately said, 'What is it?'

'Tell them where we went when we left here Friday night,' Cutler said. 'The gentlemen are intent on playing cops and robbers.'

'You're joking,' Leshe said, and realized at once that they were not. 'We went to dinner with some friends,' she said quickly. 'Marge and Daniel Ronetshe's one of our mannequins. Why?'

'What time did you leave the restaurant, Mrs Cutler?'

'At ten.'

'Was your husband with you all that time?'

'Yes, of course he was.' She turned to Cutler and said, 'Are they allowed to do this? Shouldn't we call Eddie?'

'Who's Eddie?' Khng said.

'Our lawyer.'

'You won't need a lawyer.'

'Are you a new detective?' Cutler asked Kling suddenly.

'What's that supposed to mean?'

'It's supposed to mean your interviewing technique leaves something to be desired.'

'Oh? In what respect? What do you find lacking in my approach, Mr Cutler?'

‘Subtlety, to coin a word.’

‘That’s very funny,’ Kling said.

‘I’m glad it amuses you.’

‘Would it amuse you to know that the elevator operator at 791 Stafford Place gave us an excellent description of the man he took up to Tinka’s apartment on the night she was killed? And would it amuse you further to know that the description fits you to a tee? How does that hit your funny bone, Mr Cutler?’

‘I was nowhere near Tinka’s apartment last Friday night.’

‘Apparently not. I know you won’t mind our contacting the friends you had dinner with, though just to check.’

‘The receptionist will give you their number,’ Cutler said coldly.

‘Thank you.’

Cutler looked at his watch. ‘I have a lunch date,’ he said. ‘If you gentlemen are finished with your’

‘I wanted to ask your receptionist about those telephone messages,’ Carella said. ‘And I’d also appreciate any information you can give me about Tinka’s friends and acquaintances.’

‘My wife will have to help you with that.’ Cutler glanced sourly at Kling

and said, ‘I’m not planning to leave town. Isn’t that what you always warn a suspect not to do?’

‘Yes, don’t leave town,’ Kling said.

‘Bert,’ Carella said casually, ‘I think you’d better get back to the squad. Grossman promised to call with a lab report sometime this afternoon. One of us ought to be there to take it.’

‘Sure,’ Kling said. He went to the door and opened it. ‘My partner’s a little more subtle than I am,’ he said, and left.

Carella, with his work cut out for him, gave a brief sigh, and said, ‘Could we talk to your receptionist now, Mrs Cutler?’

Chapter 3

When Carella left the agency at two o'clock that Monday afternoon, he was in possession of little more than he'd had when he first climbed those blue-carpeted steps. The receptionist, radiating wide-eyed helpfulness, could not remember any of the phone messages that had been left for Tinka Sachs on the day of her death. She knew they were all personal calls, and she remembered that some of them were from men, but she could not recall any of the men's names. Neither could she remember the names of the women callers; yes, some of them were women, she said, but she didn't know exactly how many nor could she remember why any of the callers were trying to contact Tinka.

Carella thanked her for her help, and then sat down with Lesue Cutler—who was still fuming over Kling's treatment of her husband and tried to compile a list of men Tinka knew. He drew another blank here because Lesue informed him at once that Tinka, unlike most of the agency's mannequins (the word 'mannequin' was beginning to rankle a little) kept her private affairs to herself, never allowing a date to pick her up at the agency, and never discussing the men in her life, not even with any of the other mannequins (in fact, the word was beginning to rankle a lot). Carella thought at first that Lesue was suppressing information because of the jackass manner in which Kling had conducted the earlier interview. But as he questioned her more completely, he came to believe that she really

knew nothing at all about Tinka's personal matters. Even on the few occasions when she and her husband had been invited to Tinka's home, it had been for a simple dinner for three, with no one else in attendance, and with the child Anna asleep in her own room. Comparatively charmed to pieces by Carella's patience after Kling's earlier display, Lesue offered him the agency flyer on Tinka, the composite that went to all photographers, advertising agency art directors, and prospective clients. He took it, thanked her, and left.

Sitting over a cup of coffee and a hamburger now, in a luncheonette two blocks from the squadroom, Carella took the composite out of its manila envelope and remembered again the way Tinka Sachs had looked the last time he'd seen her. The composite was an eight-by-ten black-and-white presentation consisting of a larger sheet folded in half to form two pages, each printed front and back with photographs of Tinka in various poses.

Carella studied the composite from first page to last.

The only thing the composite told him was that Tinka posed filly clothed, modeling neither lingerie nor swimwear, a fact he considered interesting, but hardly pertinent. He put the composite into the manila envelope, finished his coffee, and went back to the squadroom.

Kling was waiting and angry.

‘What was the idea, Steve?’ he asked immediately.

‘Here’s a composite on Tinka Sachs,’ Carella said. ‘We might as well add it to our file.’

‘Never mind the composite. How about answering my question?’

‘I’d rather not. Did Grossman call?’

‘Yes. The only print they’ve found in the room so far are the dead girl’s. They haven’t yet examined the knife, or her pocketbook. Don’t try to get me off this, Steve. I’m goddamn good and sore.’

‘Bert, I don’t want to get into an argument with you. Let’s drop it, okay?’

‘No.’

‘We’re going to be working on this case together for what may turn out to be a long time. I don’t want to start by’

‘Yes, that’s right, and I don’t like being ordered back to the squadroom just because someone doesn’t like my hne of questioning.’

‘Nobody ordered you back to the squadroom.’

‘Steve, you outrank me, and you told me to come back, and that was ordering me back. I want to know why.’

*Because you were behaving like a jerk, okay?’

*I don’t think so.’

‘Then maybe you ought to step back and take an objective look at yourself.’

‘Damnit, it was you who said the old man’s identification seemed reliable. Okay, so we walk into that office and we’re face to face with the

man who'd just been described to us! What'd you expect me to do? Serve him a cup of tea?'

'No, I expected you to accuse him'

'Nobody accused him of anything!'

*of murder and take him right up here to book him,' Carella said sarcastically. "That's what I expected.'

'I asked perfectly reasonable questions!'

'You asked questions that were snotty and surly and hostile and amateurish. You treated him like a criminal from go, when you had no reason to. You immediately put him on the defensive instead of disarming him. If I were in his place, I'd have hed to you just out of spite. You made an enemy instead of a friend out of someone who might have been able to help us. That means if I need any further information about Tinka's professional life, I'll have to beg it from a man who now has good reason to hate the police.'

'He fit our description! Anyone would have asked'

'Why the hell couldn't you ask in a civil manner? And then check on those friends he said he was with, and then get tough if you had something to work with? What did you accomplish your way? Not a goddamn thing. Okay, you asked me, so I'm telling you. I had work to do up there, and I couldn't afford to waste more time while you threw mud at the walls. That's why I sent you back here. Okay? Good. Did you check Cutler's aUbi?'

'Yes.'

'Was he with those people?'

'Yes.'

'And did they leave the restaurant at ten and walk around for a while?'

'Yes.'

'Then Cutler couldn't have been the man Cyclops took up in his elevator.'

'Unless Cyclops got the time wrong.'

That's a possibility, and I suggest we check it. But the checking should have been done before you started hurling accusations around.'

'I didn't accuse anybody of anything!'

'Your entire approach did! Who the hell do you think you are, a Gestapo agent? You can't go marching into a man's office with nothing but an idea and start'

'I was doing my best!' Kling said. 'If that's not good enough, you can go to hell.'

'It's not good enough,' Carella said, 'and I don't plan to go to hell, either.'

'I'm asking Pete to take me off this,' Kling said.

'He won't.'

Why not?

'Because I outrank you, like you said, and / want you on it.'

'Then don't ever try that again, I'm warning you. You embarrass me in front of a civilian again and'

'If you had any sense, you'd have been embarrassed long before I asked you to go.'

'Listen, Carella'

'Oh, it's Carella now, huh?'

'I don't have to take any crap from you, just remember that. I don't care what your badge says. Just remember I don't have to take any crap from you.'

'Or from anybody.'

'Or from anybody, right.'

'I'll remember.'

'See that you do,' Kling said, and he walked through the gate in the slatted railing and out of the squadroom.

CareUa clenched his fists, unclenched them again, and then slapped

one open hand against the top of his desk.

Detective Meyer came out of the men's room in the corridor, zipping up his fly. He glanced to his left toward the iron-runged steps and cocked his head, listening to the angry clatter of Kling's descending footfalls. When he came into the squadroom, Carella was leaning over, straight-armed, on his desk. A dead, cold expression was on his face.

'What was all the noise about?' Meyer asked.

'Nothing,' Carella said. He was seething with anger, and the word came out as thin as a razor blade.

'Kling again?' Meyer asked.

'Kling again.'

'Boy,' Meyer said, and shook his head, and said nothing more.

On his way home late that afternoon, Carella stopped at the Sachs apartment, showed his shield to the patrolman still stationed outside her door, and then went into the apartment to search for anything that might give him a line on the men Tinka Sachs had known—correspondence, a memo pad, an address book, anything. The apartment was empty and still. The child Anna Sachs had been taken to the Children's Shelter on Saturday and then released into the custody of Harvey Sadler who was Tinka's lawyer to await the arrival of the little girl's father from Arizona. Carella walked through the corridor past Anna's room, the same route the murderer must have taken, glanced in through the open door at the rows of dolls lined up in the bookcase, and then went past the room and into Tinka's spacious bedroom. The bed had been stripped, the blood-stained sheets and blanket sent to the police laboratory. There had been blood stains on the drapes as well, and these too had been taken down and shipped off to Grossman. The windows were bare now, overlooking the rooftops below, the boats moving slowly on the River Dix. Dusk was coming fast, a reminder that it was still only April. Carella flicked on the lights and walked around the chalked outline of Tinka's body on the thick green carpet, the blood soaked into it and dried to an ugly brown. He went to an oval table serving as a desk on the wall opposite the bed, sat in the pedestal chair before it, and began rummaging through the papers scattered over its top. The disorder told him that detectives from Homicide had already been through all this and had found nothing they felt worthy of calling to his attention.

He sighed and picked up an envelope with an airmail border, turned it over to look at the flap, and saw that it had come from Dennis SachsTinka's ex-husband in Rainfield, Arizona. Carella took the letter from the envelope, unfolded it, and began reading: